1.1 RUMPELTONIAN BRUTALISM

Inspired by architectural Brutalism's exposed concrete and unadorned functionalism, Rumpeltonian Brutalism strips visual art down to its most fundamental digital elements. The movement takes its name and philosophy from the post-war architectural style that rejected ornamentation in favor of raw materials and honest construction—but applies these principles to digital creation.

No gradients. No filters. No soft edges or subtle shading. Only the harsh primary colors, basic shapes, and geometric forms that MS Paint provides by default in its tool palette. Where architectural Brutalism gave us imposing concrete towers that didn't apologize for their weight and presence, Rumpeltonian Brutalism gives us images that don't apologize for their digital crudeness.

Thornberry calls it "visual assault" and "the aesthetic equivalent of a cinder block to the face," but adherents argue it's the only honest response to an over-processed, Instagram-filtered world. In an era where every smartphone photo gets automatically "enhanced" and every image is smoothed and beautified by algorithms, Brutalist works stand defiant in their refusal to please the eye.

Key principles include:

- Honesty of materials: Digital tools should be visible, not hidden. If you're working in MS Paint, the work should look like MS Paint.

- Functional geometry: Shapes serve the composition, not decoration. A rectangle is a rectangle, not an opportunity for rounded corners and drop shadows.

•Color as structure: Colors are used in their pure, unmixed form—straight from the palette, no blending or tinting. The garish clash of pure yellow against pure blue is celebrated, not softened.

•Anti-refinement: The movement actively resists polish. Wobbly lines, imperfect shapes, and visible construction marks are left in place as evidence of the human hand (or mouse).

Vensmire argues that Rumpeltonian Brutalism is “the visual manifestation of digital austerity—a rejection of the baroque excess of modern graphic design in favor of elemental truth.” He’s written extensively about how the movement parallels Brutalist architecture’s original mission: to create honestly, efficiently, and without bourgeois pretense.

Critics note that both architectural Brutalism and Rumpeltonian Brutalism tend to be deeply polarizing—people either find them refreshingly honest or simply ugly. Practitioners consider this division a feature, not a bug. Art that pleases everyone, they argue, has failed to take a stand.